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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Radio Service OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Saturday, October 1, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM THE STATES." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U.S.D.A.

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What I have for you today are a few glimpses of a treasure hunt now going on in many different States. The treasure is vitamin C, so valuable to health and so easily lost. The people taking part in the hunt are nutrition workers. They are searching for ways to save this vitamin in our common food especially--ways to save it so that all of us will have enough for best health. The glimpses of this search that I'm about to give you come from various State experiment stations.

From Wisconsin comes some news of the vitamin in sauer kraut. Workers there have been testing what they call "kitchenette kraut," that is, sauer kraut put up at home in half-pint fruit jars instead of in big old-fashioned crocks. They found that kraut put up in these small convenient containers is a pretty good source of the vitamin--about as good as commercial kraut. After 2 months' storage it still tested a third as rich in vitamin C as fresh raw cabbage. And fresh raw cabbage, you know, is one of the richest sources of the vitamin.

Maybe you would like to know how sauer kraut juice compares with the kraut itself. It is considerably richer in vitamin C, the Wisconsin workers report. The reason probably is that vitamin C is soluble in water and naturally much of it goes into the juice of the kraut.

Very often kraut molds on top of the jar or crock. The Wisconsin people wanted to know whether this mold had any effect on the vitamin. They found that it had a bad effect. At least wherever there was mold on top of the jar, the vitamin was destroyed in the top layer of kraut.

New York State workers have centered their search lately on cooked cabbage. They've been trying to find out the best ways of cooking cabbage to save the vitamin C. So far the method known as panning takes the honors. Panned cabbage, as of course you know, is just heated a few minutes in a frying pan with a little butter o other fat. Quick cooking and no water added--probably 2 reasons why it's a good method for saving vitamin C. Next to panning, steaming proved best. But the most common way of cooking cabbage — shredding it, boiling in water, and then draining off the water—that's the most wasteful method as far as the vitamin is concerned. A good deal of the vitamin goes off in the water; more is destroyed by contact with air and head in boiling.

Up in Maine the search has even been carried into the pickle jar. And the Maine workers report that pickles are among our misunderstood foods. Farm people especially have been depending on pickles for food value that pickles just don't ha At least, farm families often use pickles as substitutes for fresh or canned vegetables.

The Maine workers found that at many winter meals in farm homes pickles and potatoes were the only vegetables served. Children often took no fruit or vegetable except a pickle in their school lunch boxes. And during the canning season housewives put up as many or sometimes more pickles than canned vegetables or fruits. As a result, farm families may suffer from various "winter ills" because they run low on vitamin C. For the Maine workers found that pickles contain little or none of this vitamin. They tested 13 kinds of pickles and relishes made by Maine housewives as well as 3 kinds put up in the laboratory. All ranked low in C. The sample that tested highest was a relish made from fresh green pepper and raw cabbage

The moral of this story is not that there's no good in pickles but rather that pickles cannot take the place of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables that are good sources of vitamin C. Pickles are useful for flavor. Their tart, spicy, salty or sweet flavor may enliven an otherwise monotonous winter meal which is all to the good. But that meal needs other vegetables and fruit.

In Florida and New York State workers have continued their search for vitamin C in home-canned tomato juice. The Florida workers say that home-canned juice can be just as righ in vitamin C as commercially canned juice depending on the tomatoes and the canning method used. The smaller the air-space at the top of the can or jar, the better for keeping vitamin C in the juice.

The New York State workers find that tin and glass make a difference, too. They found that the juice canned in tin kept its vitamin much better than that canned in glass. In fact, tomato juice canned in tin tested almost twice as rich as that in glass, even when the glass containers were kept stored in the dark.

What air can do to vitamin C in tomato juice is plenty, say the New York workers. As soon as they opened canned tomatoes or juice, the oxygen in the air began destroying the vitamin. Cans of tomatoes lost about a quarter of their vitamin C strength when they stood open for 4 days in the refrigerator.

This concludes the glimpses of the research on saving vitamin C recently reported from several State experiment stations.